

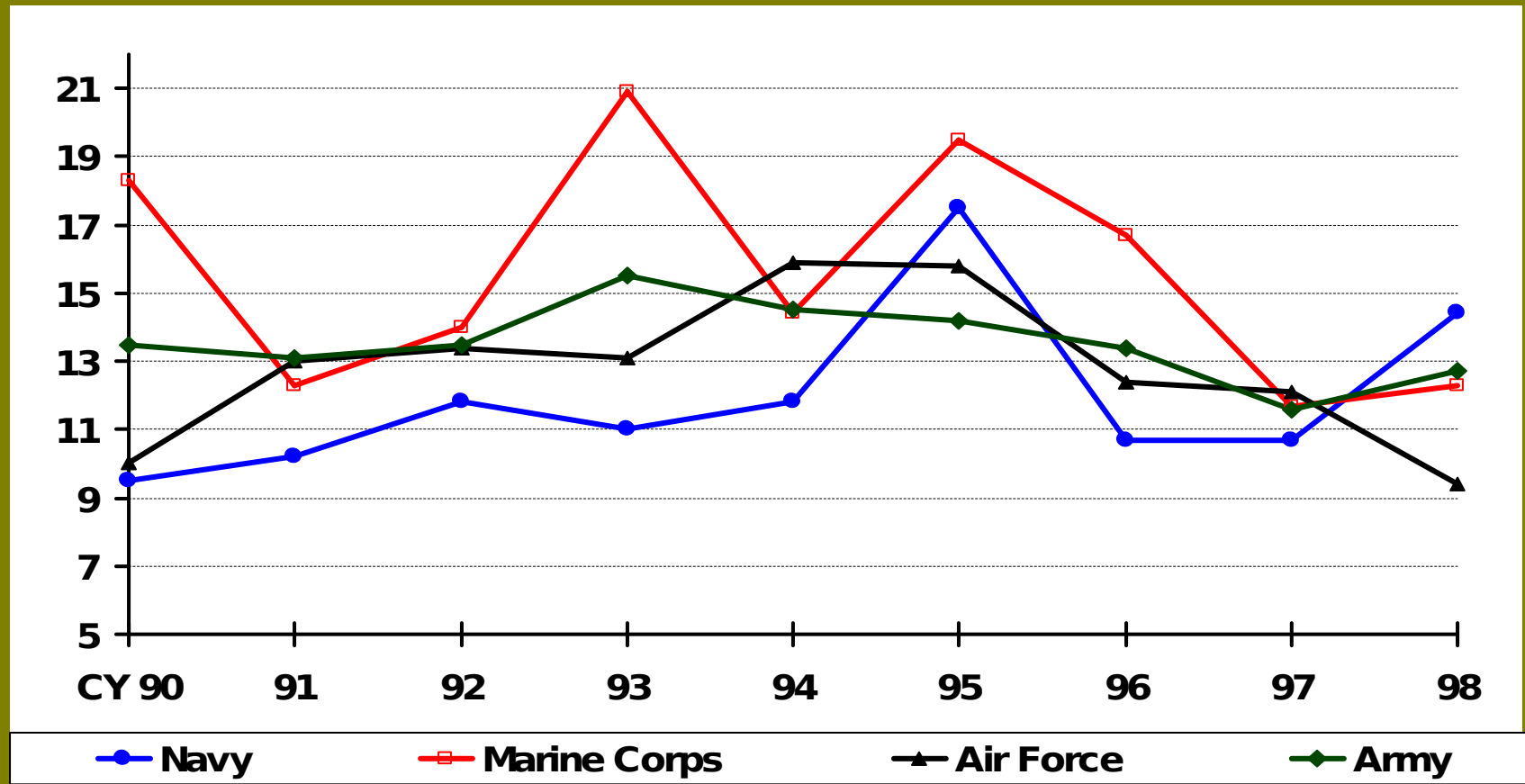
Suicide Prevention

Captain Sonia Menenberg NC USN
Mental Health Outreach Coordinator
Naval Hospital, Camp Pendleton
(760) 725-1131



(Suicide Rates by Service, CY1990-98

Suicide Rate/100,000)

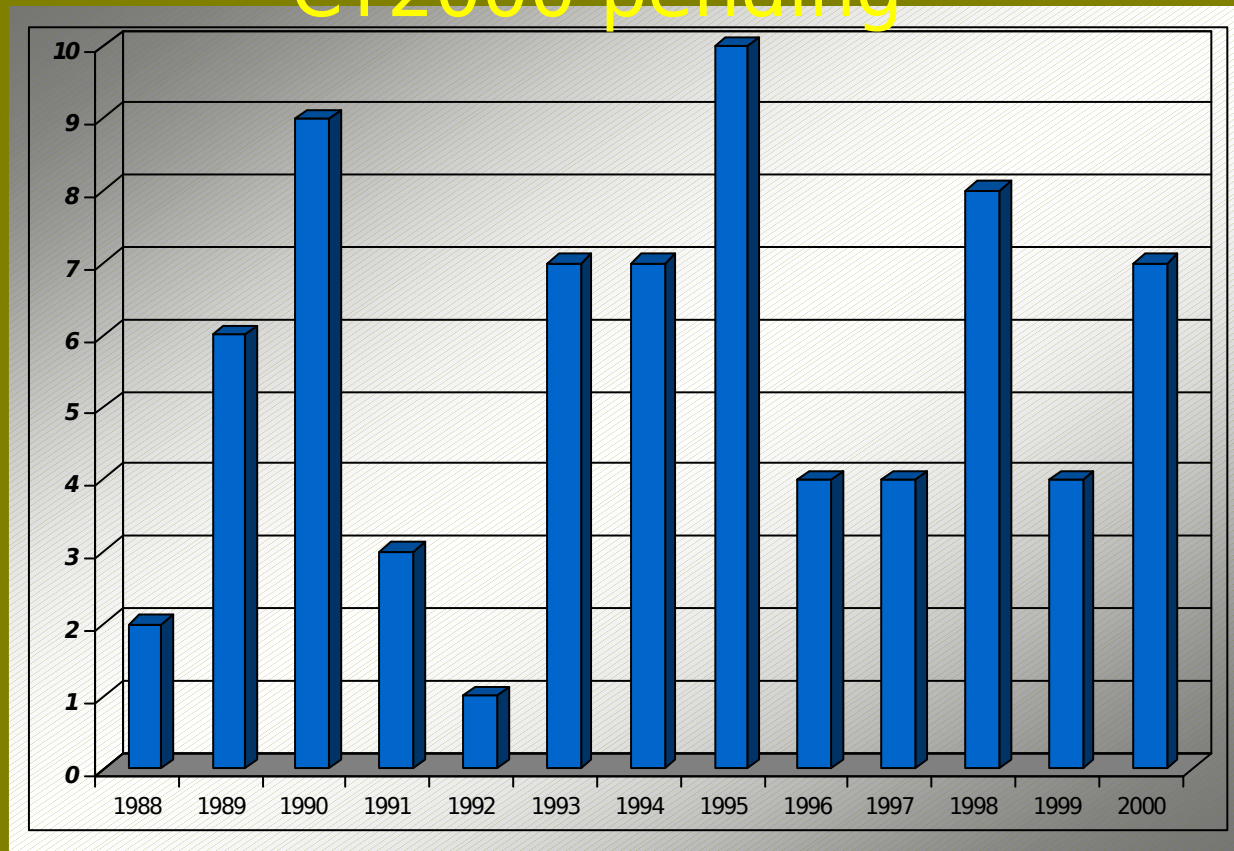


NPC-601B (03 Feb
00/data for CY0

Completed suicides at Camp Pendleton

CY 1988-2000

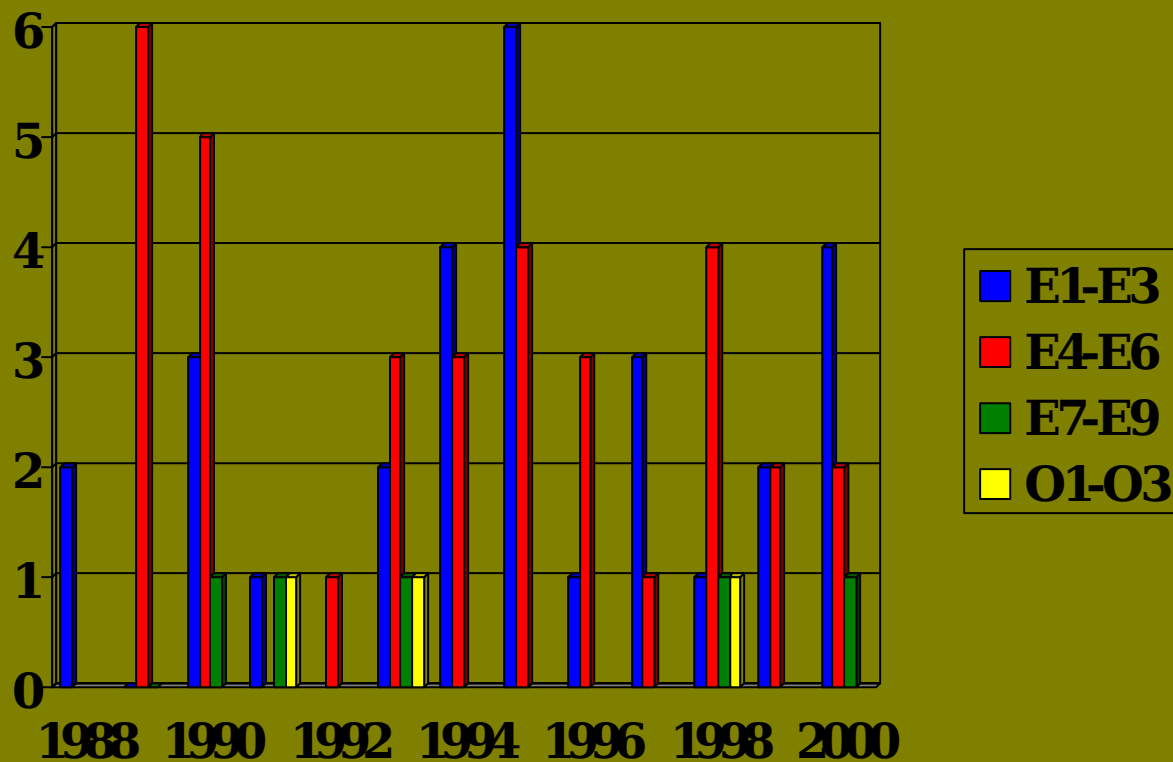
*CY2000 pending



Completed suicides at Camp Pendleton by rank

CY1988-2000

CY2000-pending



SAD PERSONS

- Sex
- Age
- Depression
- Previous attempt
- Ethanol
- Rational thinking loss
- Sickness
- Organized plan
- No spouse
- Social Support lacking



SAD PERSONS MILL

- Sex
- Age
- Depression
- Previous attempt
- Ethanol
- Rational thinking loss
- Sickness
- Organized plan
- No spouse
- Social support lacking
- Model
- Impulsive
- Legal
- Loss



Signs of Depression

- Depressed Mood
- Depressed Mood With Agitation
- Impaired Appetite
- Sleep Problems
- Difficulties Concentrating
- Tearful
- Fatigue
- Thoughts of Death



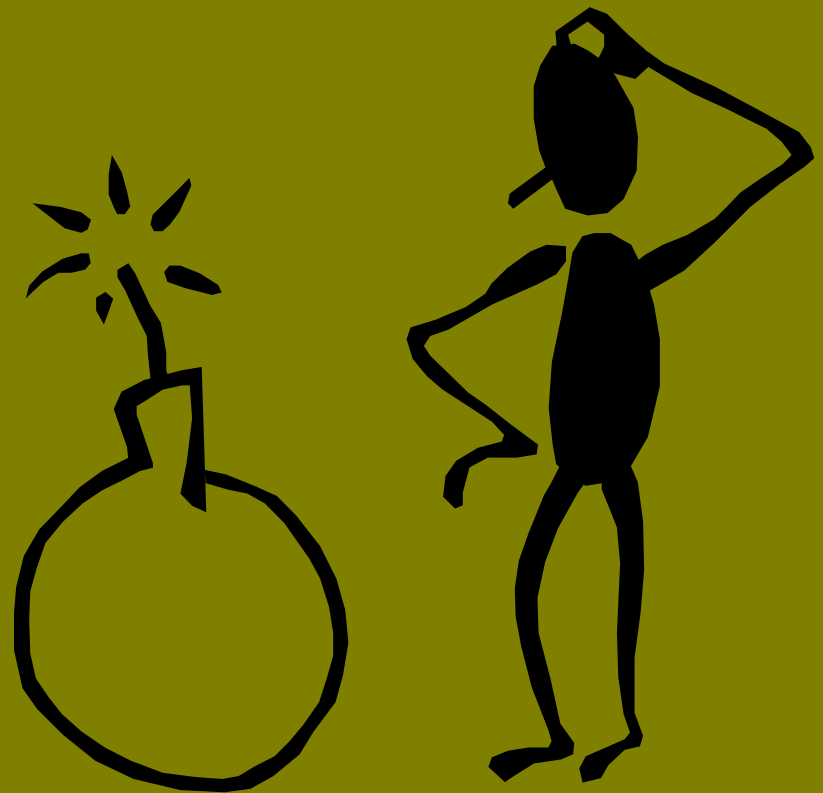
Practical responses - AID LIFE

- **A**sk the person if they're thinking about suicide
- **I**ntervene immediately
- **D**on't keep it a secret
- **L**ocate help
- **I**nform your chain of command
- **F**ind someone, don't leave the person alone
- **E**xpedite, get help right away



Lessons learned

- CONFRONT PROBLEMS EARLY
 - problems associated with suicide don't just get better in time
 - Early counseling may prevent suicide



Lessons learned



- Consider periods of high risk
- Members facing admin/legal action - especially those of higher rank
- Members recovering after Mental Health and Substance Use treatment



Lessons learned



- Encourage subordinates to tolerate mistakes as a milestone to success
 - suicide can be impulsive reaction to failure
 - focus mentoring on building character

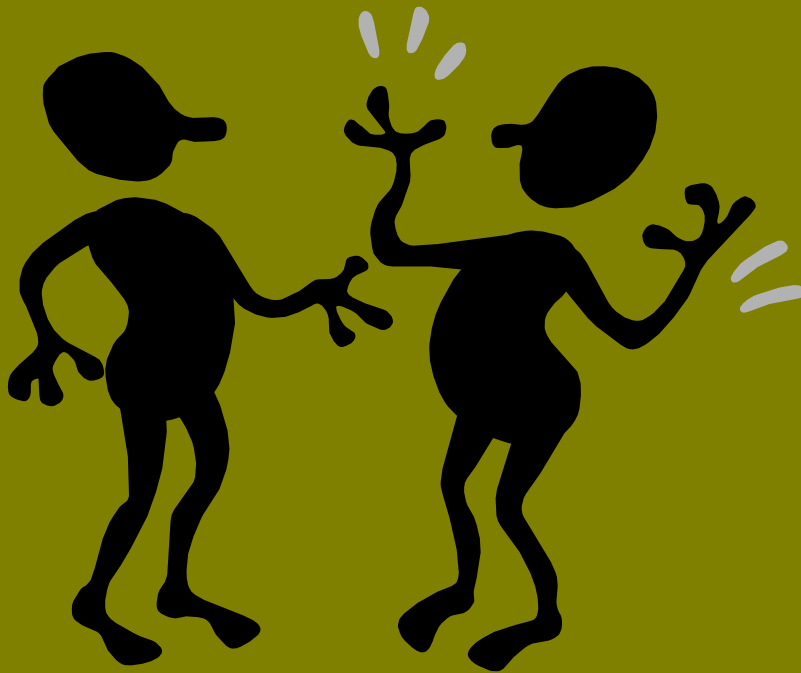


Lessons learned

- Instruct troops to inform chain
 - peers are usually first to know



Dos & Don'ts



- Don't offer simplistic reassurance
- Don't be judgmental
- Do approach
 - ask directly
 - if gut not comforted - seek help
- Remember
 - being suicidal is temporary state that can be resolved
 - Suicide is preventable



Resources

- CHAIN OF COMMAND
- Chaplain
- Unit Doctor
- Family Services Center
- Crisis hotlines
- NARED
- CSSAC
- Mental Health Dept
- Emergency Room



What can senior Marine Corps leadership do to make a real difference in suicide prevention programs?



The Marine Corps Community

- 170,313 Service Members (Apr 2000)
- Educated, Employed, Housed, Health Care, One Language
- Clearly Identified Community Leaders
- Prescreened; Low Illicit Drug Use (~1%); Discharge for Mental Illness
- Formal Gatekeeper Network



Community Prevention Partners

- Medical
- Mental Health
- NARED/CSACC
- Family Advocacy
- Intervention & Treatment Branch
- Chaplains
- Command
- Law Enforcement
- Legal
- CDC
- Walter-Reed Army Inst. Of Research



Assumptions / Approach

- Suicides are preventable *One is too many*
- Tip of the iceberg *Address entire iceberg*
- Not a medical problem *A community problem*
- No proven approaches *Use CDC & WHO guidelines*
- Partnerships key to success *All partners shared stake in outcome*
- Cultural barriers to prevention *Leverage senior leaders for cultural change*



Suicide Model*

Explanation

(Mood, Aggression,
Substance Abuse,
Anxiety, Neuro-
Chemistry)
(In Trouble, Loss, Humiliation)

(Anxiety--Dread,
Hopelessness, Anger)

↑ Taboo,
Support,
Ventilation



Disorder

Stress Event

Mood Change

Inhibition

Survival

No Taboo,
Method Avail
Recent Example
Excitation/
Impulsivity,
Solitude

Facilitation

Suicide

Prevention Action

Case Find--Treat

Anger Management, Conflict
Resolution, Negotiation Skills,
Parenting Skills, Financial Mgm

Crisis Intervention,
Protection/Support

Promote/Protect
Help-Seeking--Treat

Public Affairs
Guidance
Method Control
Alcohol Control
Social Support

*David Shaffer, M.D., Columbia U.

Why Focus on Community?

Growing National Dialogue on Community

- **Concern about Erosion of Community**
- **Extent to which community members:**
 - Demonstrate a sense of *shared responsibility* for the general welfare of the community and its members, and
 - Evidence *collective competence* in confronting situations that threaten the integrity of the community and the safety and well-being of its members.



Today's Environment...

THE MIDDLETONS

BY RALPH DUNAGIN & DANA SUMMERS



Collaborating to Build a “Front Porch” Mentality

“Please go the extra mile to foster a sense of belonging. Make sure your people feel they are a member of the team at unit functions and other small gatherings. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that *social connections* save lives...Let’s ensure we take care of our own--our Air Force family.”



General Michael Ryan
Air Force Chief of Staff

**“Taking care of each other
is the cornerstone of our
service philosophy.”**

**“I bring attention to suicide among
Marines not to affix blame, but to
highlight my belief in the responsiveness
of our leaders to meet threats to the
health and readiness of our Corps...
leaders at all levels must be vigilant for
warning signs of problems that can
escalate into suicidal behavior. We must
do everything to reinforce the message
that “It’s OK to get help.”**



Actions

- Community Leader Messages
 - Social Support
 - Help-seeking Behavior
- Policy
 - Increased confidentiality in mental health
 - Handoff to commanders
- Education
 - Career Development Courses
 - Annual Risk Awareness & Prevention Training



Actions

- Mental Health Screening
- Unit Behavioral Health Surveys
- Surveillance Database--All Self Injuries
- Post-intervention
- Re-engineering Human Services
 - Primary Prevention Roles for Mental Health Providers
 - Integrated Delivery of Community Services

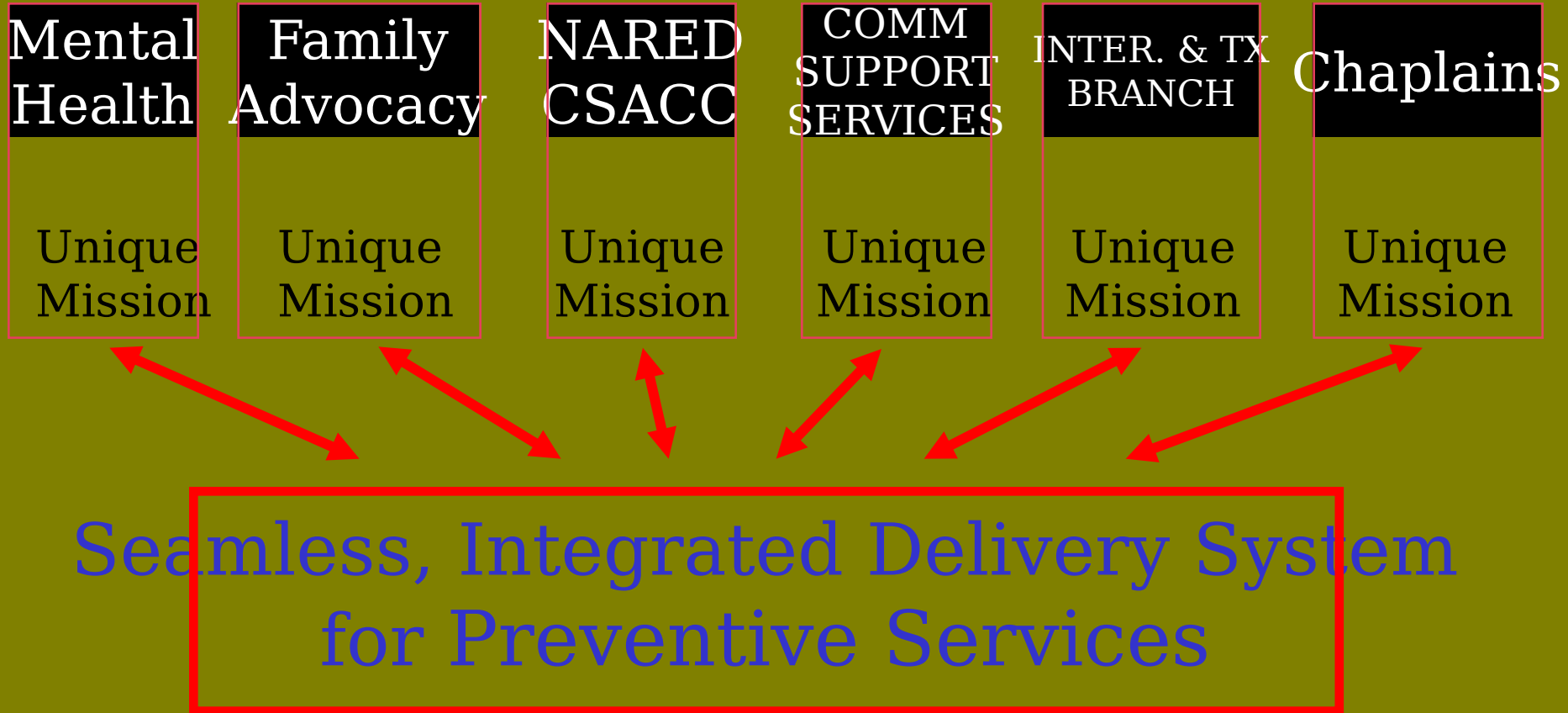


Community Preventive Services

Pre-2000



Community Preventive Services Post-2000



Suicide Factors

Key Risk Factors*

- Mental Health Problems
- Substance Abuse
- Relationship Problems
- Poor Coping Skills
- Legal Problems
- Previous Attempts
- Financial Problems
- Job/Performance
- Social Isolation



Protective Factors*

Social Support

Belonging & caring
Leadership
responsibilities

Effective Coping Skills

Policies & Culture that:

Approve/encourage help seeking behavior

Protect those who seek help

*** Most of these are modifiable**

Necessary Conditions

Prevention

- Knowledge base
- Political will
- Social strategy



Where Do We Go From Here

- National Strategy
- Community as an Organizing Principle
 - All Stakeholders
 - Boldly Address Seemingly Intractable Problems
 - Link the Continuum of Prevention



Where Do We Go From Here

- Evaluate, Evaluate, Evaluate
 - Other Social Factors
 - Mental Health Staffing
 - Antidepressant Utilization
 - Inpatient/Outpatient Mental Health Service
 - Attitudes



**“Still, the effort seems
unhurried. Every
seventeen minutes in
America someone
commits suicide. Where
is the public concern
and outrage?”**



**Kay Redfield Jamison, Ph.D., Professor of
Psychiatry, The Johns Hopkins School of**

Questions

